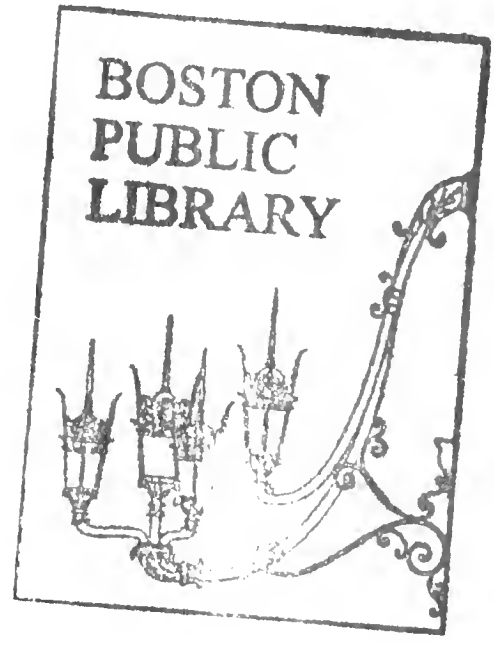
BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

planning department



SUMMARY REPORT

PUBLIC OPEN SPACE IN EAST BOSTON

East Boston
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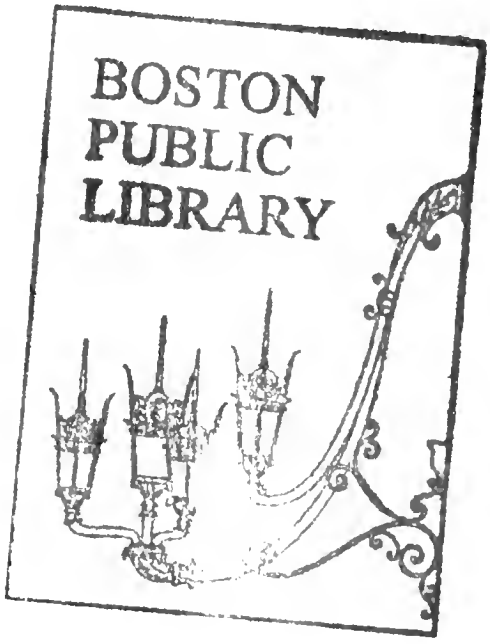
BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

planning department



SUMMARY REPORT

PUBLIC OPEN SPACE IN EAST BOSTON

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UMMARY REPORT

PUBLIC OPEN SPACE IN

Boston Redevelopment Authority

Planning Department

EAST BOSTON District Planning Program

ERRATUM:

page one, under 'IV. Standards and Needs for Public Open Space', first paragraph should read -

'Various standards were used to evaluate public open space in East Boston. The results indicated that many areas in East Boston are unserved by public open space and that East Boston has over two times less public open space per capita than the City as a whole.

Summary Report: Public Open Space in East Boston

I. Introduction

A study of public open space in East Boston was prepared by the BRA Planning Department in February, 1971 for the purpose of examining existing public open space facilities in East Boston in order to detail needs and to recommend implementation measures for improving parks and recreation facilities in the district.

II. Description of East Boston

East Boston is located in the northeast of Boston proper (See Map 1). It is a residential community edged primarily by industrial uses on the south and west and by Logan Airport on the east. The area is densely settled with wooden frame three to four decker houses predominating with the exception of the Orient Heights area where single family houses are the dominant land use.

The population of East Boston has been declining in recent decades. Age distributions indicate a decline in the more mobile portion of the population, those groups between the ages of 20 and 39; and an increase for those groups under 14 and over 40. East Boston has tended to have a larger percentage of children under fifteen than the City as a whole.

An examination of the most recent census data available (1960) indicated that East Boston had several areas where physical and social conditions were such that there was a serious need for adequate public open space and recreation facilities as well as other public services.

III. Public Open Space Inventory (See Map 2)

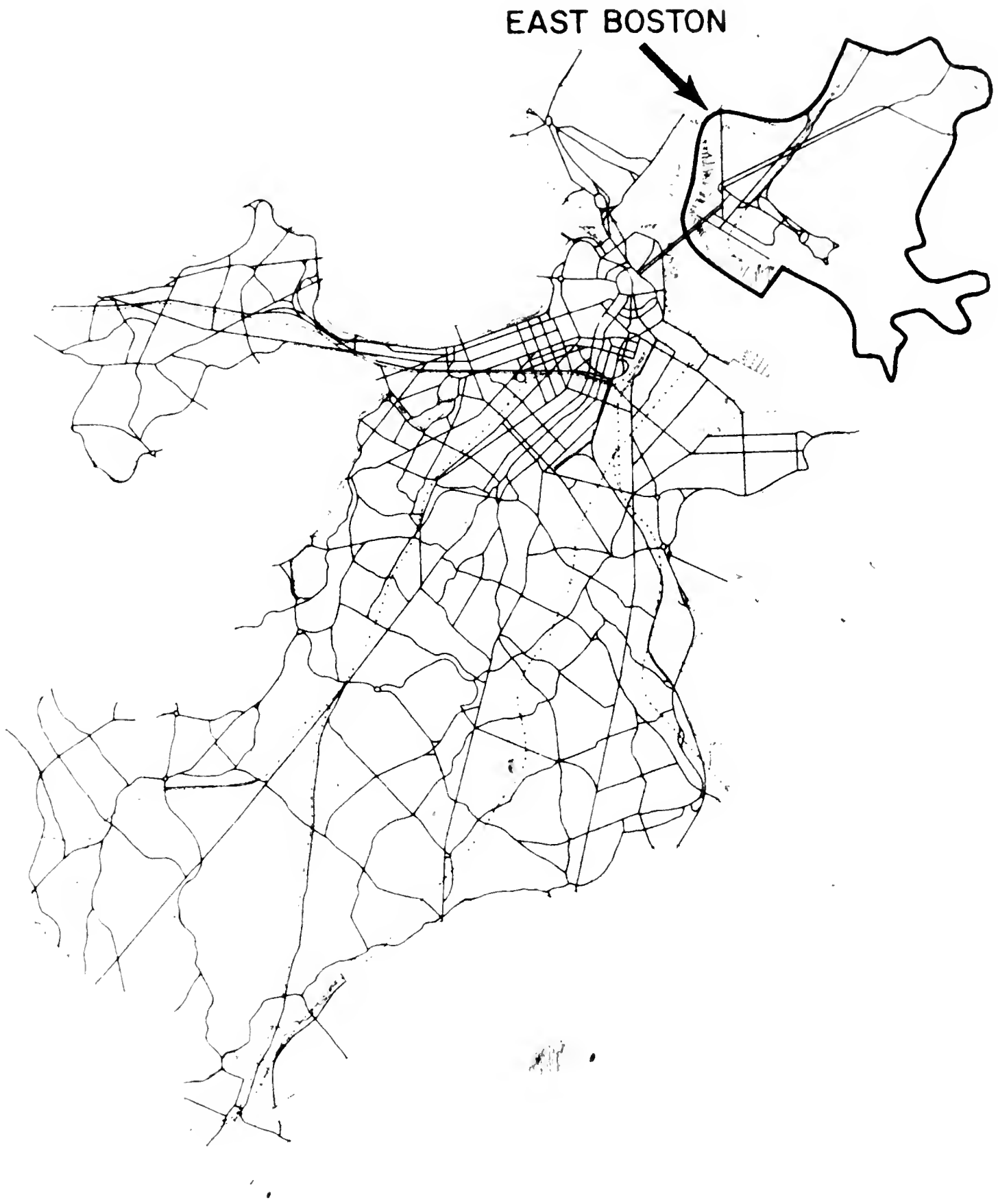
Field surveys of public open space in East Boston revealed a lack of variety in types of facilities available and lack of response to the surrounding environment. Several facilities were poorly located and access severely restricted due to the presence of physical barriers such as highways, railroad and rapid transit rights of way (see Maps 3 through 6 - dotted lines represent physical barriers which impede access to open space).

Many facilities are currently scheduled for improvements by the City of Boston. However, these improvements will mainly serve only to bring the existing areas up to minimum standards.

IV. Standards and Needs for Public Open Space

Various standards were used to evaluate public open space in East Boston. The results indicated that many areas in East Boston are unserved by public open space; and that East Boston has about one-fourth less public open space per capita than the City as a whole.

Analysis of a survey conducted in 1969 by the East Boston Recreation Advisory Council and the Urban Field Service showed that over half of those residents responding to the question concerning existing parks in East Boston stated that the parks were poor to very poor. Only three percent of the respondents said that parks were good to very good.



MAP 1

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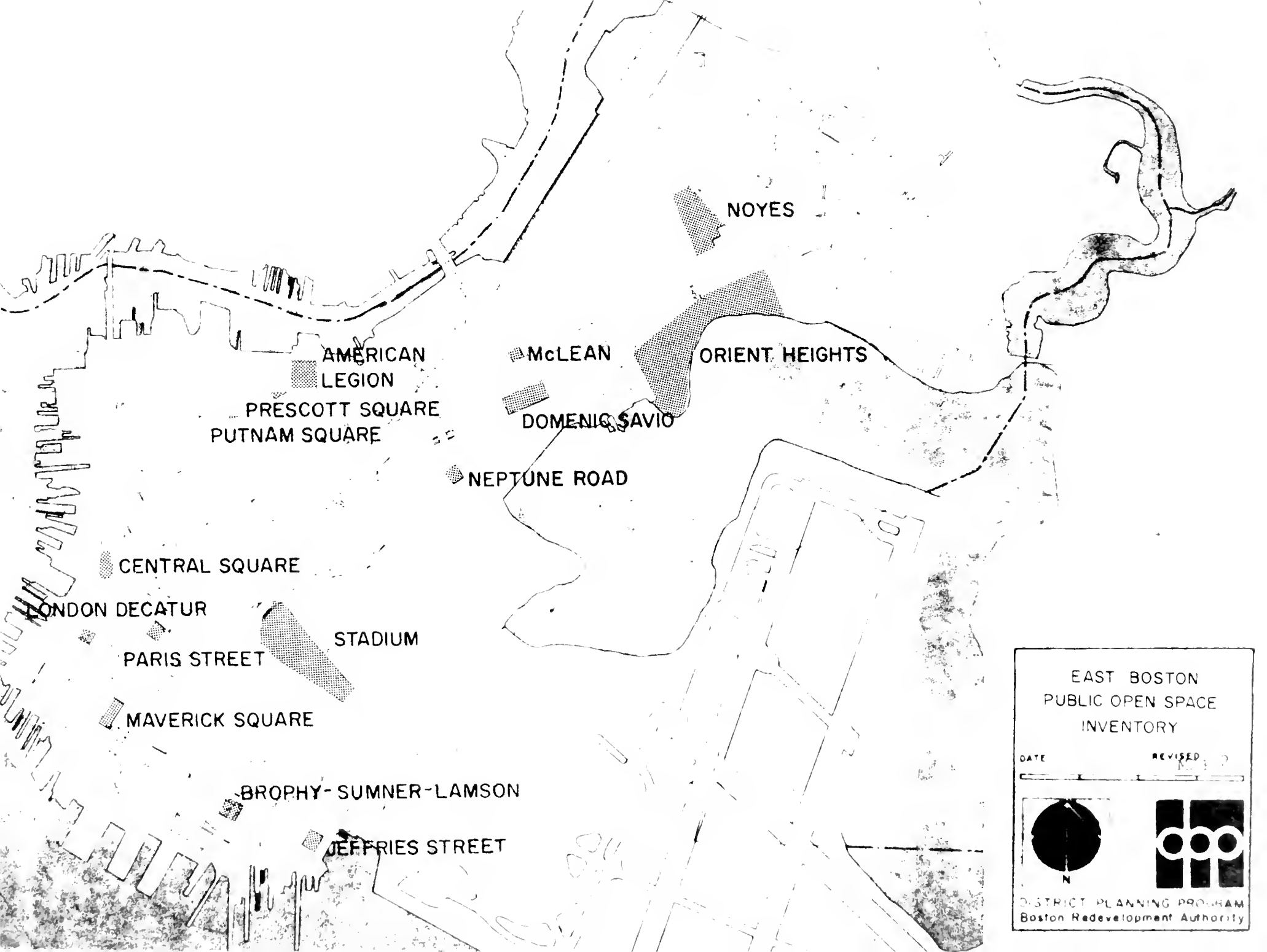
DISTRICT PLANNING PROGRAM

BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY


NOYES
AMERICAN LEGION
McLEAN
ORIENT HEIGHTS
PRESCOTT SQUARE
PUTNAM SQUARE
DOMENIC SAVIO
NEPTUNE ROAD
CENTRAL SQUARE
LONDON DECATUR
STADIUM
PARIS STREET
MAVERICK SQUARE
BROPHY-SUMNER-LAMSON
JEFFRIES STREET
EAST BOSTON
PUBLIC OPEN SPACE
INVENTORY
DATE
REVISED
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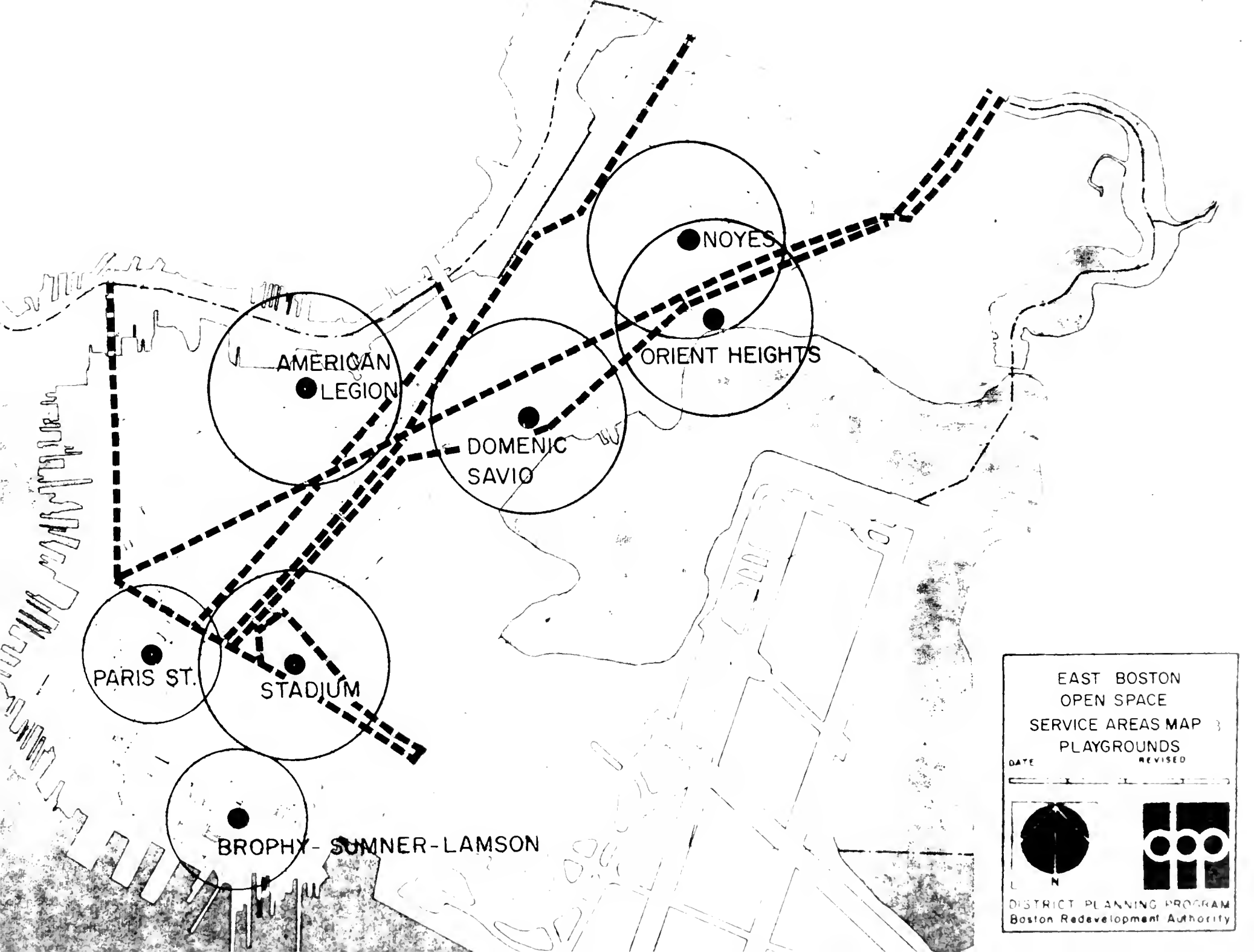
DISTRICT PLANNING PROGRAM
Boston Redevelopment Authority


NOYES
ORIENT HEIGHTS
AMERICAN LEGION
DOMENIC SAVIO
PARIS ST.
STADIUM
BROPHY - SUMNER - LAMSON
EAST BOSTON
OPEN SPACE
SERVICE AREAS MAP
PLAYGROUNDS
DATE
REVISED
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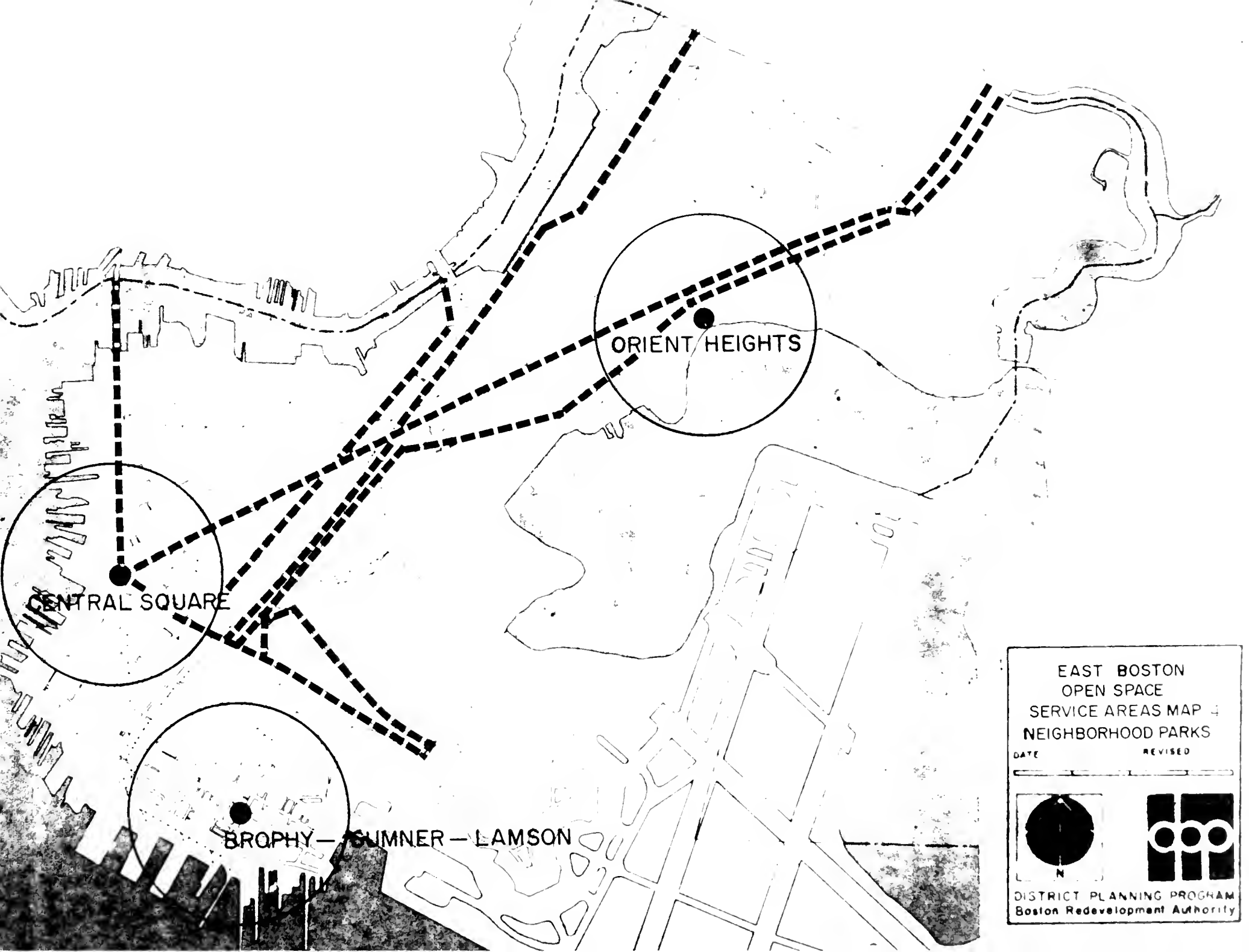
DISTRICT PLANNING PROGRAM
Boston Redevelopment Authority


ORIENT HEIGHTS
CENTRAL SQUARE
BROPHY — SUMNER — LAMSON
EAST BOSTON
OPEN SPACE
SERVICE AREAS MAP 4
NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS
DATE
REVISED
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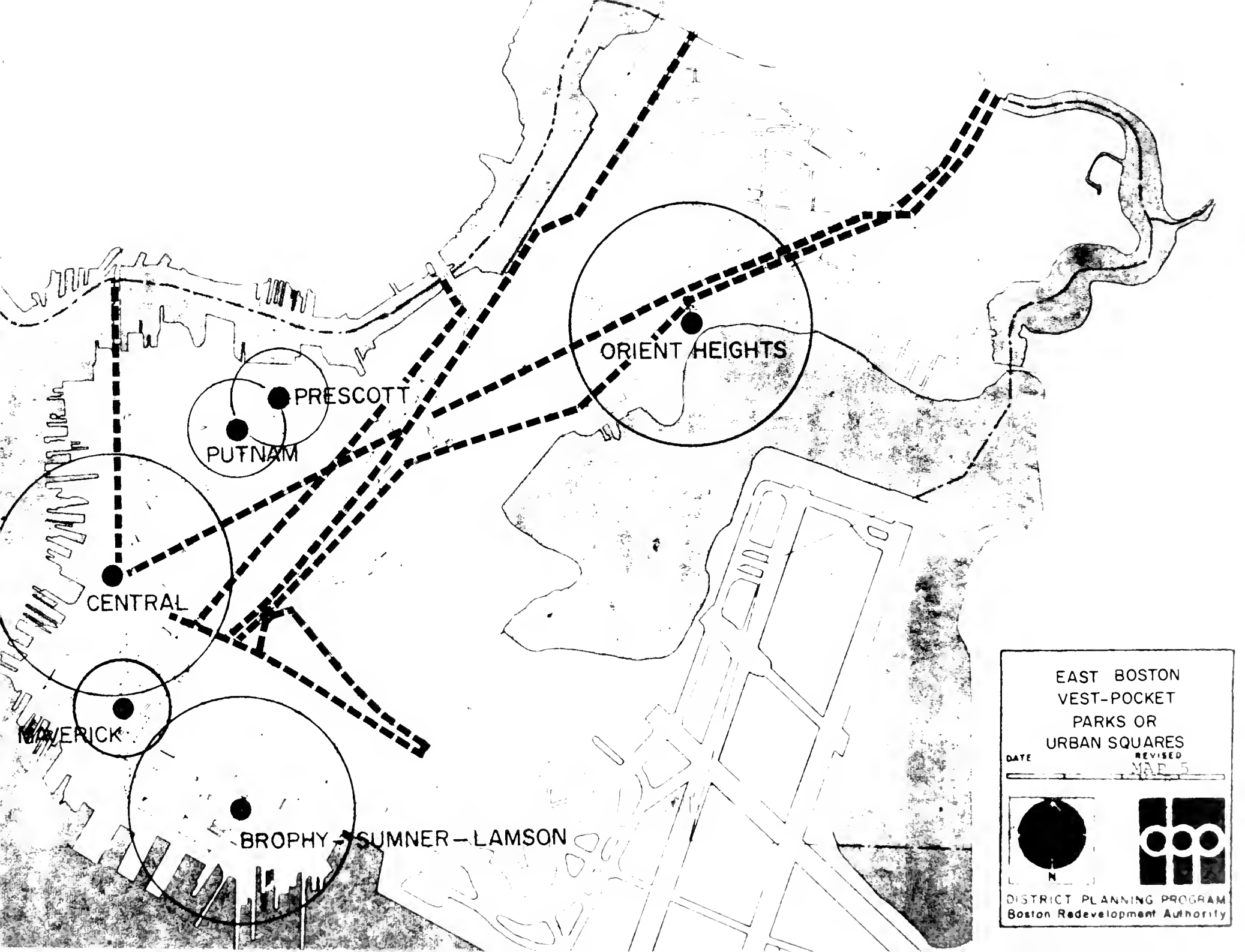
DISTRICT PLANNING PROGRAM
Boston Redevelopment Authority


ORIENT HEIGHTS
PRESCOTT
PUTNAM
CENTRAL
MAVERICK
BROPHY – SUMNER – LAMSON
EAST BOSTON
VEST-POCKET
PARKS OR
URBAN SQUARES
DATE
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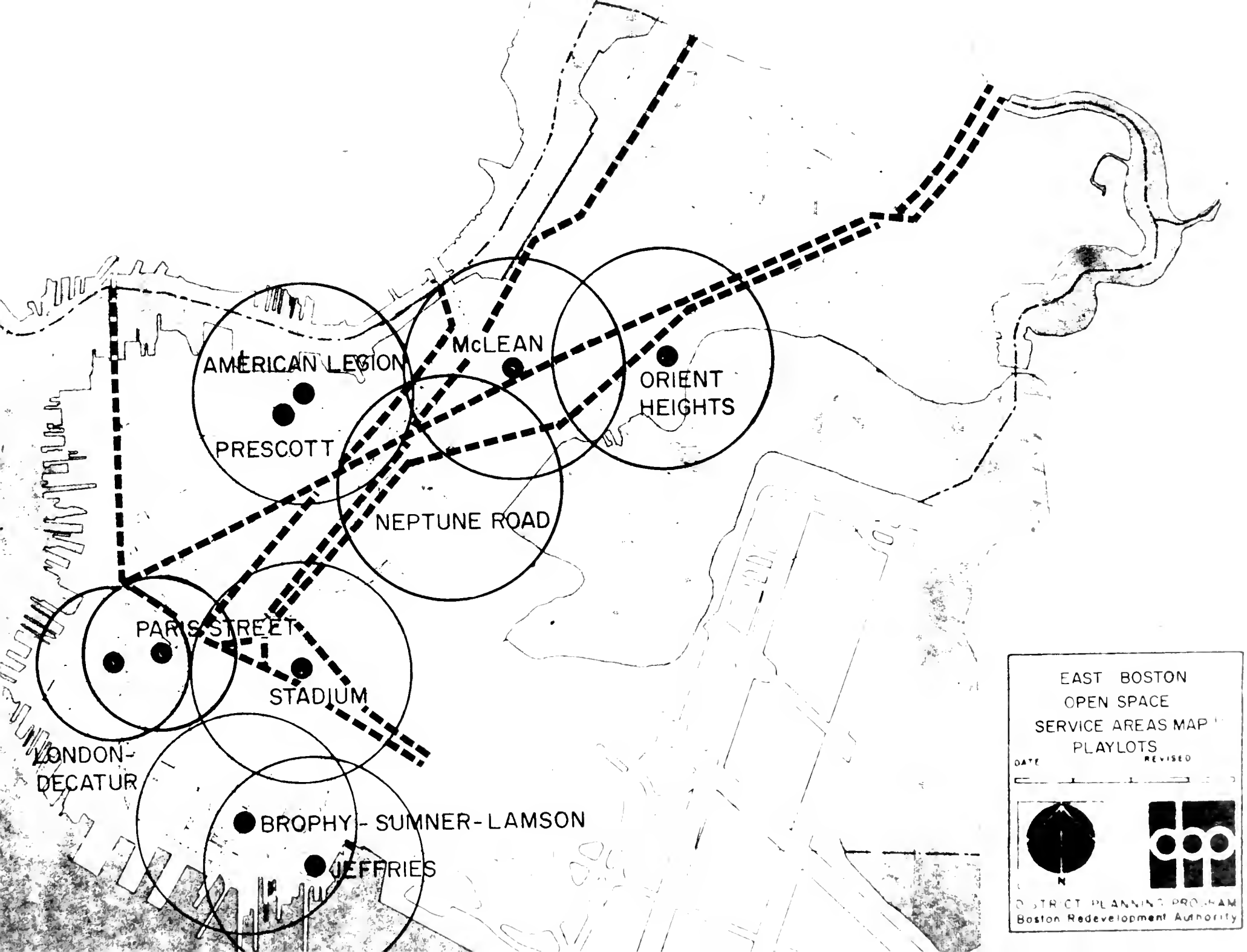
MAP 5
N
DISTRICT PLANNING PROGRAM
Boston Redevelopment Authority


AMERICAN LEGION
PRESCOTT
McLEAN
ORIENT HEIGHTS
NEPTUNE ROAD
PARIS STREET
STADIUM
LONDON-DECATUR
BROPHY - SUMNER - LAMSON
JEFFRIES
EAST BOSTON
OPEN SPACE
SERVICE AREAS MAP
PLAYLOTS
DATE
REVISED
N
DISTRICT PLANNING PROGRAM
Boston Redevelopment Authority

V. Recommendations

These recommendations are made for consideration by public agencies responsible for open space, and for use by interested community groups. The recommendations are examples of some of the actions that might be taken to improve public open space in East Boston and were made with the hope that a series of priorities can be recognized and scheduled according to the availability of local, state, and federal funds.

The City should:

A. Summer Program

Establish a more comprehensive summer program on its school playgrounds in East Boston. Until recently, the School Committee conducted summer programs on many of its school play areas. Because of lack of funds, the School Committee agreed to allow the Parks and Recreation Department to establish supervised summer activities. The Parks and Recreation Department has only been able to provide programs on two school play areas in East Boston (the Lyman and Cheverus Schools). The Office of Cultural Affairs, through its Summerthing program, has been providing summer activities in school yards. This report recommends further coordination between Summerthing and the School Committee with possible provision of temporary summer "adventure" playgrounds on school grounds with Summerthing - Parks and Recreation - School Committee coordination and cooperation.

The summer programs should be more extensive in areas of particular need, areas with concentrations of lower income families and multi-family dwellings.

B. Sheltered Recreation Facilities

Provide special facilities for sheltered recreation areas and areas capable of being utilized in very warm and very cold weather, such as a spray pool area that can also be used for skating in the winter. Climatic conditions are very often overlooked as factors in designing open space and recreation areas. A significant portion of the year is either too hot, too cold, or inclement for outdoor activities. Outdoor play areas are really only usable in good weather.

C. London and Decatur Street Playlot

Purchase or lease from the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority the area adjoining the London and Decatur Street playlot. The site is now used for dumping snow, an inefficient use of a potential recreation site in an intensely developed urban area. The site should be improved with additional trees, a tot lot, and a sitting area.

D. Noyes Playground

Equip Noyes Playground with additional tot lot equipment in order for the park to serve the adjacent 400 unit apartment development more adequately.

E. Orient Heights Beach

Request that the Metropolitan District Commission make improvements to the Orient Heights Beach area. Specifically, improvements should be made to the existing tennis court and the fence around the handball court. The tot area is in a poor location; it is cut off from the north by the MBTA right-of-way and is too far from residential areas. The tot area could be moved further east to serve the residential area in the Bayswater section of Orient Heights more effectively. The parking and circulation area within the Beach area should be studied to determine whether it could be more efficiently used. In addition, the bathing beach area needs landscaping with trees and shelters for shade.

F. Proposals for New Open Space by Public and Private Sectors

Open space proposals should be developed and implemented to fill the needs of the residents of the adjacent areas. In addition, proposals for open space to complement private developments are often subject to approval by the City's Zoning Board of Appeal. The open space provisions, where feasible, should be public-oriented and designed so as not to alienate and isolate the development from the immediate area.

The following recommendations are made for recent proposals for open space by City agencies:

1. Lyman-Alighieri Replacement School

The Lyman-Alighieri replacement school should provide public access to the waterfront in addition to a regular complement of school recreational facilities.

2. Barnes Junior High School

Open space planned for the Barnes Junior High School replacement should include, as a minimum, public access to the waterfront, a tot area, an informal games area, basketball courts, bocci courts, and playfields suitable for baseball-softball-football and winter ice skating.

3. New Sumner Street Park

The proposed park at the easterly end of Sumner Street is nearing completion of the design stage which has been done with community participation.

G. Recommendations for Additional Open Space

A series of studies by the Boston Redevelopment Authority Planning Department have indicated that there is a need for open space in East Boston beyond that now existing or planned.

The following recommendations will help alleviate this need.

1. Acquisition of waterfront land for open space

Public efforts should be made to secure waterfront land for public open space. East Boston is a peninsula and yet waterside open space is provided in only one area, Orient Heights, and much of this area has severe access problems which preclude its use to many population groups. This recommendation for waterfront land is consistent with the General Plan for the City, the East Boston General Neighborhood Renewal Plan, policies developed by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council and the East Boston Recreational Advisory Council.

a. First Priority Acquisition

In order to make available access and views to the harbor, and to fill gaps in service areas, a waterfront site should be acquired on the southwest side of the East Boston waterfront. Further study concerning the potential of three predominantly vacant or underutilized areas is recommended. (See Map 7) These areas are suitable for commercial and residential uses in addition to open space, but a large waterfront park containing, at a minimum, a tot area, informal games area, basketball courts, softball-stickball-touch football playfield, bocci courts, boating and a pedestrian walkway with sitting areas should be provided at one of these sites to serve the adjacent neighborhood and any residential development planned in the future. (See Suggested Site Design 1)

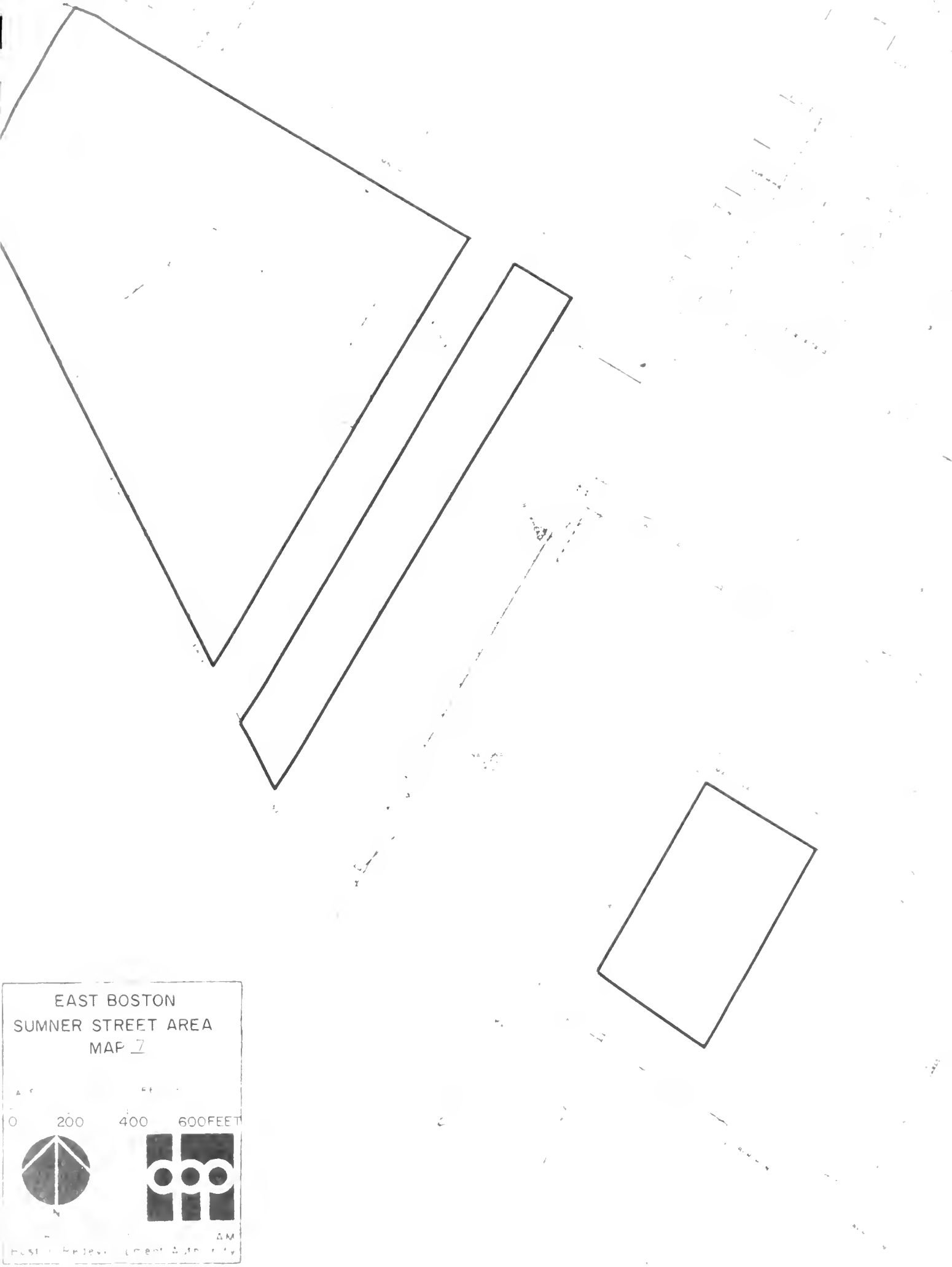
b. Second Priority Acquisition

Access to the waterfront and water-oriented activities should be provided for the northern areas of East Boston. Land on Condor Street (see Map 8) now used for the storage of rusted machinery by a private firm should be acquired. This is a second priority recommendation because the area is currently well served by American Legion Playground but waterfront access is not available. (See Suggested Site Design 2)

2. Improvement Recommendations

Ruth Street Area

Ruth Street, a public way in East Boston, connects Webster Street, in the vicinity of Brophy Park, with the Marginal Street waterfront (see Map 3). The street drops off to a series of steps called locally "the Golden Stairs". These stairs were once used by workers in the shipyards along Marginal Street. The steps are significant historical and aesthetic assets and should be preserved. From the top of the steps, views of the Boston skyline, the harbor, and port activities


EAST BOSTON
SUMNER STREET AREA
MAP 7
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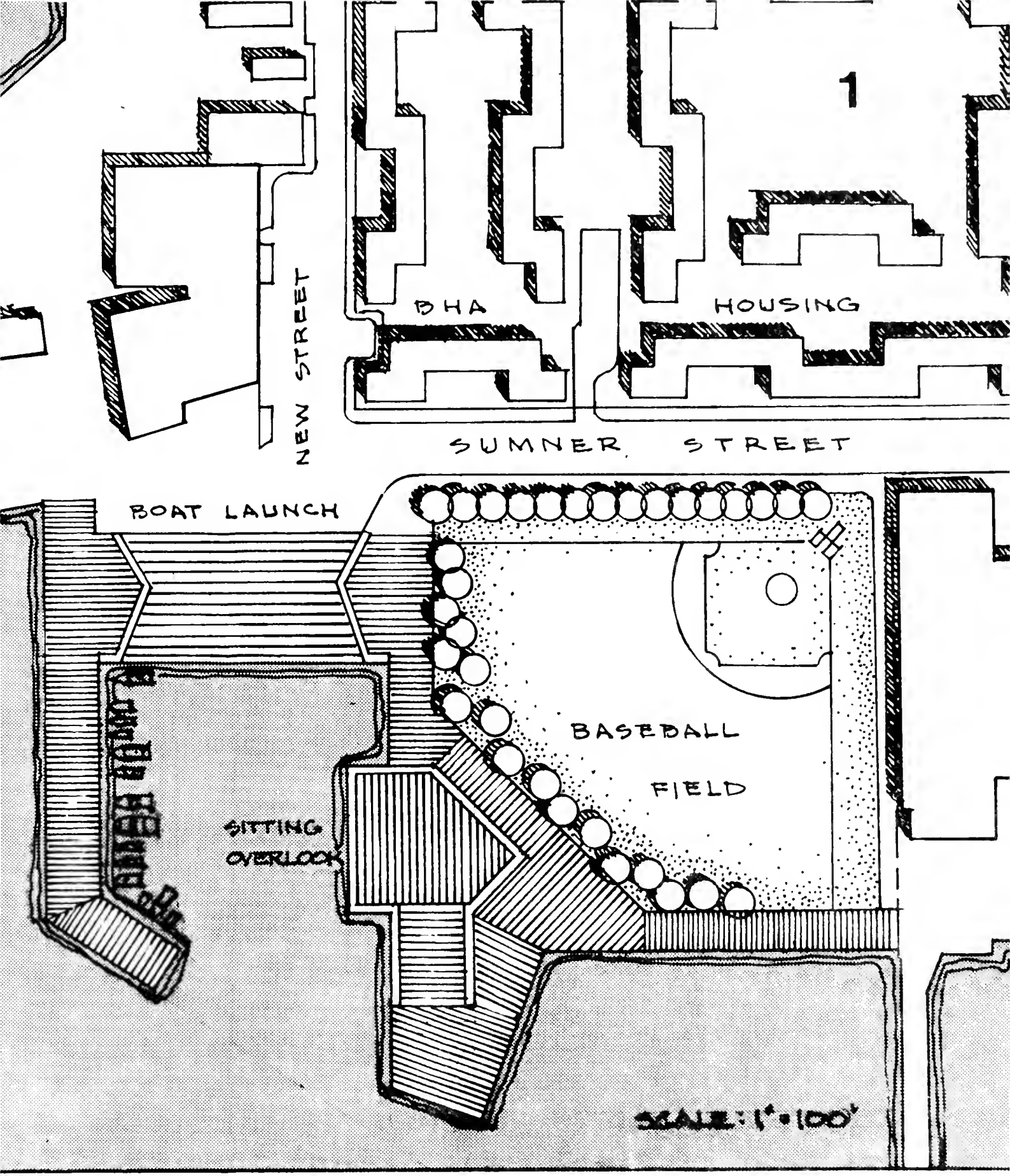
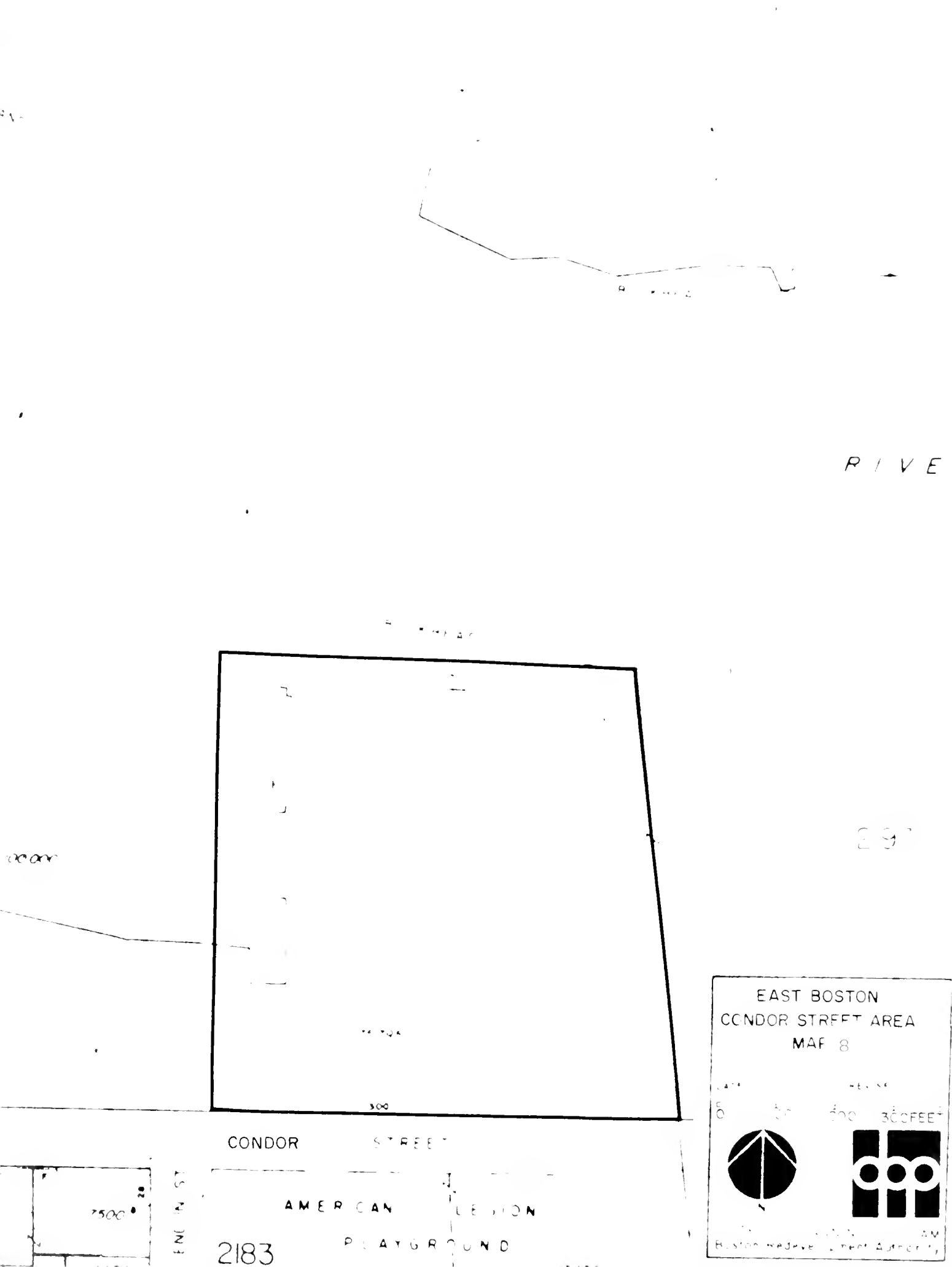
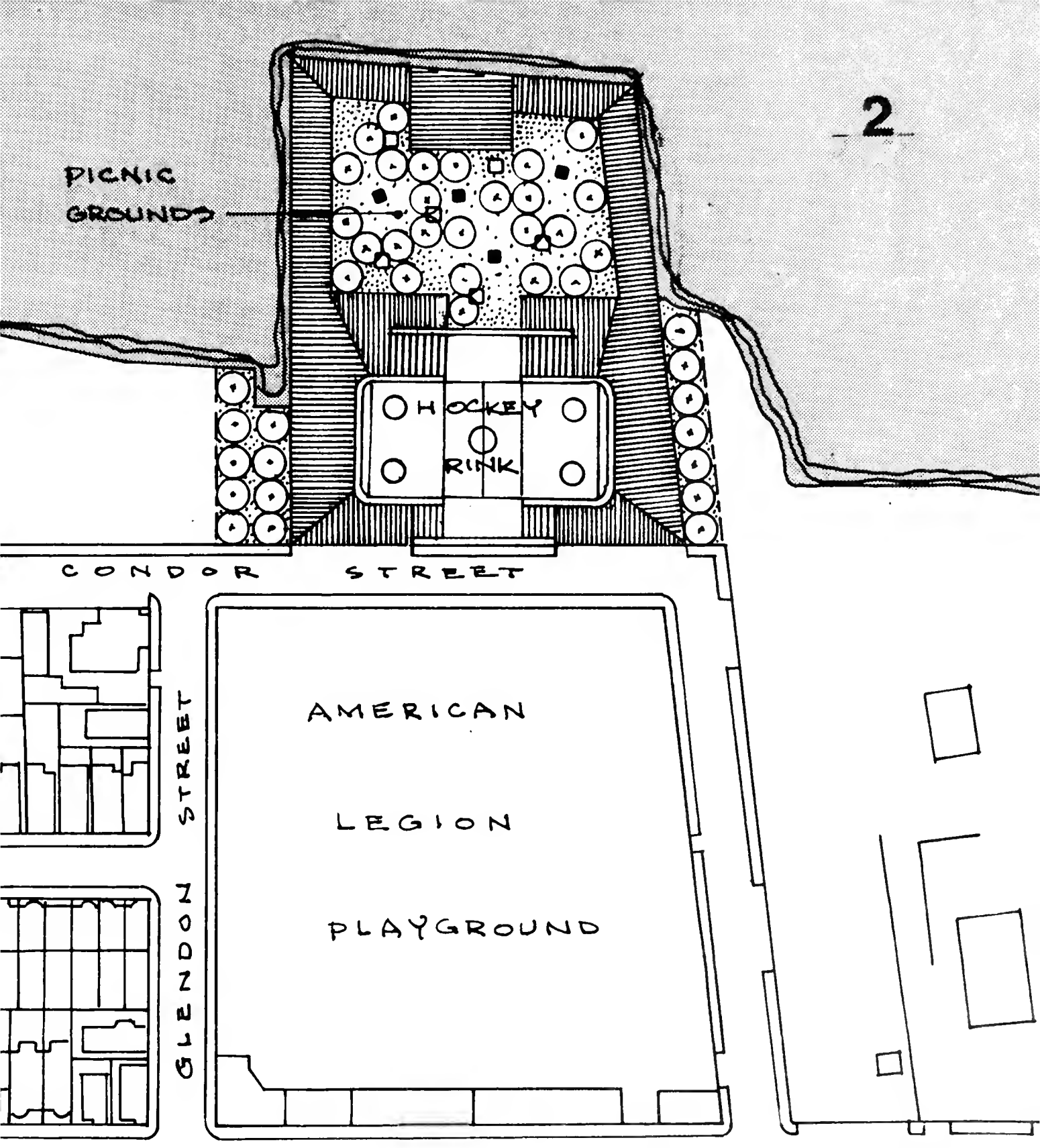
400
600FEET



SUMNER STREET DEVELOPMENT


RIVE
300
CONDOR STREET
AMERICAN LEGION
PLAYGROUND
2183
7500
EAST BOSTON
CONDOR STREET AREA
MAP 8
0
300 FEET
Boston Redevelopment Authority



SCALE: 1" = 100'

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AMERICAN LEGION PLAYGROUND EXTENSION

make this spot particularly attractive. Adjacent to the steps are four tax-foreclosed vacant parcels where a small vest-pocket park could be created. (See Suggested Site Design 3)

Noyes Playfield

This area is continually flooded during and after storms. An evaluation of the drainage problems should be undertaken in order that the site may be used more fully.

Orient Heights Area

The shore between Orient Heights and the end of Bayswater Street is littered. Floating debris presents a hazard for boats from the nearby Orient Heights Yacht Club and also washes ashore creating a nuisance at the Orient Heights Beach. The shore should be landscaped and further developed for recreation with walkways and sitting areas provided as recommended by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

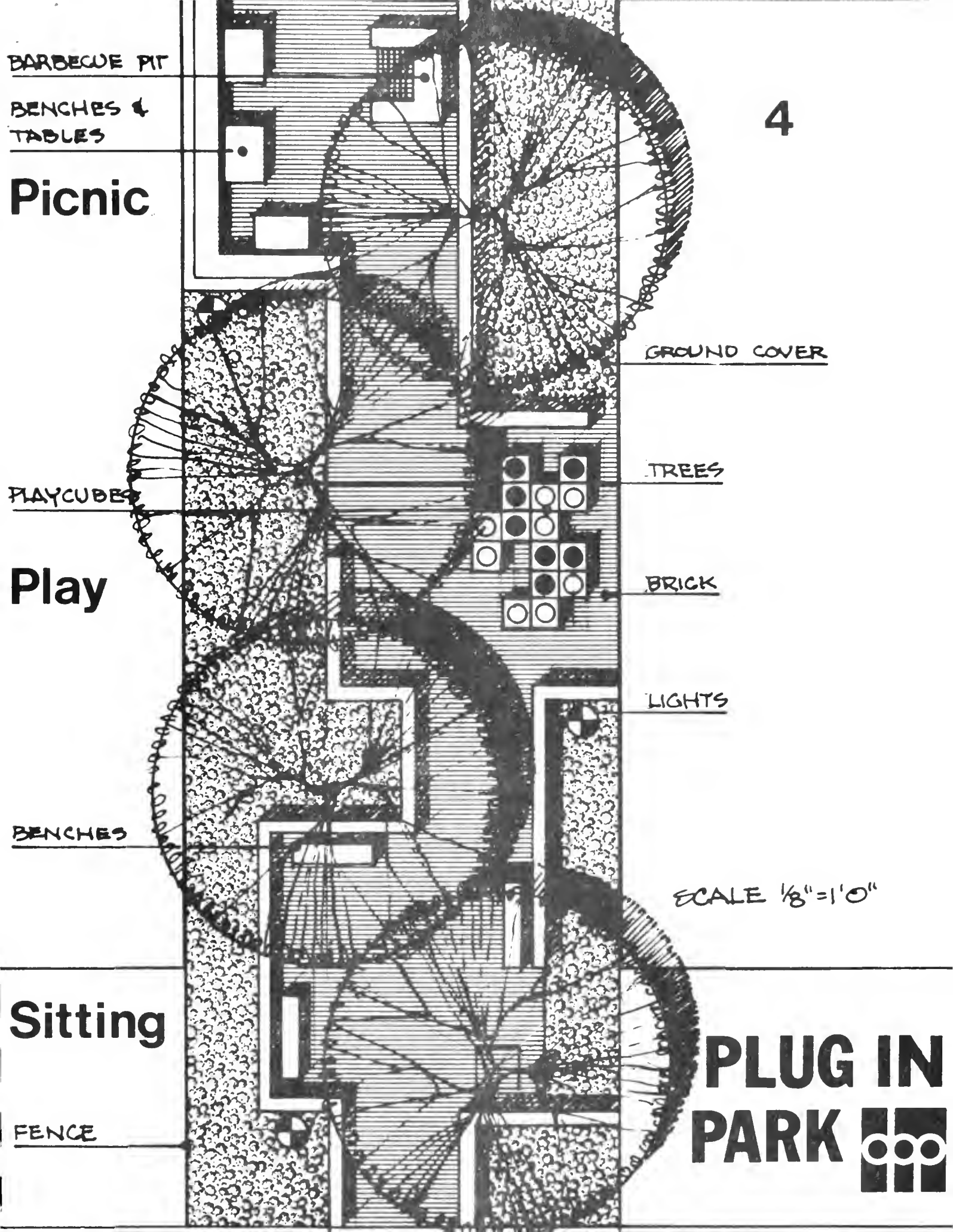
New Playlots

Many areas in East Boston are densely populated and multi-story structures predominate. This has resulted in a lack of private open space for play areas for children as well as for adult leisure. City-owned vacant lots (tax-foreclosed parcels) should be developed as vest-pocket parks or playlots, depending upon the population in the area. Each neighborhood will have its own requirements. In some areas, the requirement would be for play, in others, mothers and tots may dominate the scene, in others, gathering places for teenagers are needed.

Additional playlots are especially needed in the Eagle Hill and Paris Street areas as well as the areas near the Maverick Square and Orient Heights public housing developments. Suggested Site Design 4, below, is an example of the vest-pocket or plug-in park concept. The area pictured is the now undeveloped tax-foreclosed lot adjacent to 35 Falcon Street in Eagle Hill.

In addition to tax-foreclosed and other city-owned lots, private individuals may be willing to sell or lease areas for public open space.

BROPHY MEMORIAL PARK
WEBSTER STREET
3
RUTH STREET
TREES
BENCHES
WALKWAY
REBUILD STAIRS
BRIGHAM STREET
THE GOLDEN STAIRS
SCALE 1" = 40'
N
MARGINAL STREET


BARBECUE PIT
BENCHES & TABLES
Picnic
4
GROUND COVER
TREES
PLAYCUBES
Play
BRICK
LIGHTS
BENCHES
SCALE 1/8"=1'0"
Sitting
FENCE
PLUG IN PARK

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Reference

Public Open Space in East Boston--Summary Report.